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speak out

Going down in history

TO THE EDITOR:

The Burnside Triangle occupies a central place in the history of gay men and lesbians in the Portland metro area.

The life of prominent lesbian doctor and social activist Marie Equi is one extraordinary example of this rich history. During the early decades of the 20 century, the Burnside Triangle was home to Equi, her partner, Harriet Speckhart, and Equi's adopted daughter, Mary.

When Equi, a pacifist, openly opposed U.S. entry into World War I, the federal government tried her on treason charges. The prosecutor attempted to use her lesbianism against her at trial. Equi ultimately was convicted under a new espionage act and served time at San Quentin Prison in California.

Before gay liberation, lesbian feminism and the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s, homosexual men and women lived in a society that offered no civil rights protections in employment, housing or public accommodations and no visible community advocacy programs. In such a world, the bars and clubs in the Burnside Triangle were some of the primary social gathering places for gay men and lesbians in Portland.

Because the neighborhood was known as a place frequented by homosexual men and "unsexed women," it was also a place targeted by police and city officials in their efforts to monitor and control the activities of gay men and lesbians. In 1912 police officials and City Hall mounted a same-sex vice investigation that ruined the careers of several prominent closeted homosexual/bisexual men and led to the suicide of one man's wife. In the late 1940s the Portland Vice Squad reported on the activities of male and female impersonators at the old Music Hall on Southwest 10th Avenue and on the cruising prospects for "confirmed lesbians" at the former Buick Café on Southwest Washington Street.

During the 1970s the Portland Town Council, a gay business association firmly rooted in the Burnside Triangle, played a leading role in contravening the efforts of city officials and police to dismantle the "homosexual presence" in Portland. The work of these leaders, together with those of social activists, succeeded in bringing about a significant change in attitudes toward the queer community.

The Burnside Triangle continues to be a destination of choice for many gay, lesbian, bi and trans residents of and visitors to the metropolitan region. As a social and entertainment neighborhood with a rich history, it is one important area in the larger queer geography of Portland.

To publicly recognize and commemorate the Burnside Triangle as a historically gay district affirms the struggle of gay, lesbian, bi and trans people to achieve full citizenship in Portland and honors the contributions they have made to the city throughout its history. The citizens of Portland have demonstrated the value of such public memorials in adding to the city's social fabric: Witness the Japanese American park on the waterfront, a revitalized Chinatown and the experiences of African Americans to be recognized at stations along the Interstate MAX line.

JACOB BROSTOFF AND MELINDA MARIE JETTE
 Burnside Triangle Advisory Group Co-Chairs

Not funny

TO THE EDITOR:

OK, I think it's time to get rid of Marc Acito. Haven't we all had enough of the racist, fatphobic, inappropriate and totally insensitive remarks?

In his latest column he jokes about sexual abuse between priests and altar boys ["Groping Mechanism," Aug. 16]. That is not funny and not something to make light of. It is a reality with devastating lifelong effects for many, many people.

How can you joke about something like that? How can the editorial staff at *Just Out* allow stuff like that to be printed?

I'm really disappointed that the only (that I've found) queer newspaper in Oregon tolerates oppressive and unacceptable commentary. If those of you on the editorial staff think it's OK to continue to print stuff like Marc Acito's regularly inappropriate and degrading insults, then I think you seriously need to examine your socialization.

I've had enough of the tolerance of ignorance in the queer community. As an oppressed minority, how can we accept or perpetuate oppression against others? I would like to see some more awareness on the part of the editors, and I would like to see Mr. Acito's column canceled.

SHANNON REDMOND
 Eugene

Beating around the Bush

TO THE EDITOR:

I am quite discouraged by the media coverage, both local and national, of the President Bush protest.

For my own reasons, I was there. Marching along the streets of downtown Portland with a sea of others who were there for their own rea-

sons. We were vocal and yet we were peaceful.

What the nation saw from the media coverage is when the protesters were being pushed back after the event within the Hilton was over. Before all this, the protesters and the police had no conflict. I even stood there talking with a couple of the officers.

But when the well-dressed crowd began leaving the hotel, the police moved in to push back the protesters off a public street. It wasn't until the people who paid \$1,000 to have dinner with the president (while thousands go hungry every night in Portland) or \$25,000 to have their picture taken with him (while Portland has an ever-growing homeless problem) that the conflict between the police and protesters began.

Taxpayers soon will receive the bill for the police at this event. It is estimated to be around \$100,000—money that won't be seen in our struggling schools.

Yes, I will admit a small handful of protesters got out of control and caused us all to look bad within the minds of those who only saw the event through the media. No matter what the circumstances might be, there always will be those who take it too far.

But of all the thousands who were there to gather, it is my understanding that only five people were arrested. The media did not see fit to show coverage of the other protesters, such as myself, who did move back when the police asked us to. Even though we were on a public street staying behind the barricades at least a block away from the hotel. Even though it is our right, as Americans, to gather peacefully and demonstrate in what we believe in.

Because the police hold closed-door meetings to determine what they did, rightly or wrongly, and the protesters quickly are judged by people who viewed only what the media decided to show, a true assessment of what happened Aug. 22 never will be fair. But I was there.

What I saw on television and read in the paper and heard on local talk radio the following day is not the full story. Only a brief moment taken out of a daylong peaceful protest. But showing the peaceful protest is not newsworthy.

As a candidate for Portland City Council, I have learned firsthand how the media are selective in their reporting. But that is another issue for another time.

RIC BERRONG
 Portland

Denying AIDS

TO THE EDITOR:

Ten years ago I quit talking about AIDS because I was burned out and it seemed obvious that you either used a condom for oral and anal sex or you died. Now I am concerned that those who deny that AIDS is real are irresponsibly misleading some men into having bareback sex.

It is undeniable that having bareback sex can be as lethal and emotionally irresistible for some men as smoking or overeating, but it also can be done safely and responsibly. The most cited reasons in medical journals for risking bareback sex are drinking or drugs, which cause a lapse in judgment, or the mistaken belief that anti-HIV drugs will cure you. These reasons might be important, but I see a bigger problem with those who deny that HIV is harmful.

For example, a former Falcon gay video star named Jeff Palmer recently moved to Eugene and wrote on his Internet site (www.jeffpalmer.net) that he stopped taking AIDS drugs and that he performed a public bareback "breeding" sex act. He believes the claim of a popular Web site that the AIDS drug AZT, not HIV, causes AIDS. This is mesmerizing many men.

transitions

Kay Gardner

Spiritual leader, musician, composer and author Kay Louise Gardner died of a heart attack Aug. 28 at home in Bangor, Maine. She was believed to be in her early 60s.

She performed her first composition at the age of 4. She studied music at University of Michigan and received a master's degree from Stony Brook University.

In 1972 Gardner founded the feminist and openly lesbian band Lavender Jane. She later pursued her dream of becoming a symphony conductor by founding and recording works of women composers with the New England Women's Symphony.



By the early 1980s her focus had shifted to studying music's effects on the human body as well as its healing potential. In 1993 she began a sacred singing circle, Women with Wings, which has met weekly ever since.

Gardner is survived by her partner, Colleen Fitzgerald; daughters, Jenifer Wilson Smith of Bangor and Juliana Smith of New Castle, Del.; brother, K. Winston of Clifton, Va.; mother, Enez R. of Chatsworth, Calif.; and two grandchildren.

Memorial services were held Sept. 1 in Bangor and in Evansville, Wis. Remembrances may be made to Temple of the Feminine Divine, P.O. Box 602, Bangor, ME 04401.